



Soul Matters

Sacred Words Supplement

Faith: The Practice of Hopeful Expectation

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About Our Supplement Packets

This packet is designed to supplement our core material for the month of September on the theme of “What does it mean to be a people of Expectation?”

The goal of our supplement packets is to bring our selected [sacred words](#) into conversation with our [core themes](#). For instance, this month we pair the sacred word of “faith” with September’s core theme of Expectation. So the resources in this packet help us ask, "What does faith have to say about being a people of expectation?" and "How does the idea of faith deepen our understanding of being a people of expectation?"

Our hope is that, with the help of this packet, ministers and worship teams will theologically deepen all their services around the monthly themes and even set aside one worship service a month to focus on this connection between the theme and the selected sacred word.

To see our full list of sacred words and the core themes they are paired with for 2019-20, follow this link: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/sw-themes--pairings.html>

Chalice Lightings & Opening Words

Gathering in Faith

On call to new beginnings and the season of hopeful expectations

Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

We gather in community once again
to rekindle the bonds and the love of community
to nourish ourselves with music, song, and story
to challenge ourselves with deep questions

We gather as people in search of faith,
As people leaving faith behind,
as people holding onto faith despite it all.

In this season of beginnings and hopeful expectation,
we hold faith in the seasons and the cycles of life
knowing that every season has its place
and the turning continues.

We gather in community
to build up hope within ourselves
and to share it with one another.

Let us worship together.

So Must We

On the hopeful and high expectations that UU faith places in human beings

Rev. A. Powell Davies

So far as I can see, all the great leaders—and the great exemplars of religion—possessed...faith in life's essence, in its hidden meaning, in its moral claim, and in the rightness of its inner spiritual guidance. And by this the great ones lived their lives. So must we. There are no problems greater than our power to solve them. There are no burdens greater than our strength. We shape—by every moment of our lives—the great decisions. Then let us venture still!—with reason as a lamp to guide us—but lighted with the light of faith.

Finding Faith From Those Who Have Gone Before

Soul Matter Team

Welcome to this place of new beginnings.
Where music and silence sooth the clanging of troubled times.
Where we sit not alone,
but surrounded by the memory of those who have gone before,
whose faith helped them carry on
in times even more divided and dim than ours.
May their faithful expectation of the dawn
Help us to also glimpse and trust the new day that is yet to be.

Meditations, Prayers & Blessings

Meditation for Challenging Times, Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

A prayer for the faith to keep listening and keep hoping

Full prayer at <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/meditation-challenging-times>

"In these quiet moments we listen
We listen for the maybe still breathing, perhaps still whispering
Faintest sign of the Universal Good..."

Adrift in My Faith, Rev. Adam Dyer

On a faith as the expectation that the world is trying to call us home

Full meditation found in [Love Beyond God](#), and part of [Soul Matters Common Shelf](#)

"Sometimes I am adrift in my faith...
I must remind myself that not only can I swim,
But I can read the sun and the moon...
And the buzz of the fly that says, "land ho!"

Prayer Against Injustice and Despair, Rev. Douglas Taylor

Full prayer at <https://douglastaylor.org/2018/05/17/prayer-against-injustice-and-despair/>

"Help us to know, despite the messy complexity of life,
that we do not labor in vain,
that peace will one day prevail,
that perseverance will be rewarded
and that hope is a powerful response..."

Readings

Faith is Wakeful Expectation, [Jurgen Moltmann](#)

Faith is the wakeful expectation of God, which touches all our senses. The early Christians prayed standing up, looking up, with outstretched arms and wide-open eyes, ready to walk or to leap forward. We can see this from the pictures in the catacombs in Rome. Their posture reflects tense expectation, not quiet heart searching. ... We are watching for God's advent. With tense attention, we open all our senses for the coming of God into our lives, into our society, to this earth.

Trust Yourself to the Water, Alan Watts

On the faithful expectation that we will be held

Faith is a state of openness or trust. To have faith is like when you trust yourself to the water. You don't grab hold of the water when you swim, because if you do you will become stiff and tight in the water, and sink. You have to relax, and the attitude of faith is the very opposite of clinging and holding on. In other words, a person who is fanatic in matters of religion and clings to certain ideas about the nature of God and the universe becomes a person who has no faith at all. Instead they are holding tight. But the attitude of faith is to let go and become open to truth, whatever it might turn out to be.

Faith Needs a Running Start, Rev. Nathan Detering

On the faith and hopeful expectation that we can fly, together

From a sermon found at <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/text-sermons/16Sep2018.pdf>

About 100 yards down, on a plateau that juts down and then out into that horizon, with an edge that leads to nothing but air... And there, there is a woman and she's forty feet from the edge, And then she begins to run! Oh my God! But it's ok, maybe, because in her hands is a bar and over her shoulders are the wings of a glider. And she's running, running, and just as she gets close enough to leap And a big breath of air push up the nose of her glider and pushes her back, Nearly on her back. So she backs up again, undeterred, and puts herself in her starting position, and seems to stare down the uncertain horizon, seems to say with her body: This is just a wee jump. And then she starts running, running and she gets closer and closer. But then she rears up, and pushes the nose down and, stops, right on the edge, her body seeming to say, are you sure? You trust these wings? You have faith in this air? But then she backs up again, more uncertain, but still undeterred, and puts herself in her starting position, and stares out into the open horizon and its invisible currents, her body seems to say: trust, trust, faith, faith. And she starts running, running, running and just as she gets closer. A big breath comes and pushes underneath the wings and lifts her body out into the open, trail-less, uncertain, scary, beautiful, Wild, empty, turbulent...twilight sky.

Friends, who I love, and I do love you, here's the thing: ...though I'm uncertain of much, and have more questions than answers, This I believe;

That on these edges and on these plateau's, the bars we hold onto are the hands we hold, and the wings over our backs is the community we create. And that together we can step back and get into the starting position that is this church year together.

That [together we can] start running, running to that edge....and leap. Maybe even with just a wee bit of faith....

That the breath of love will carry us through the messy, turbulent, beautiful, the wild, empty, uncertain horizon of our lives.

If you don't have faith, let us hold faith for you.

If you don't know trust, let us hold trust for you.

Together let's leave what's heavy behind...and fly.

God or a Lottery Ticket in a Black Woman's Purse, Angelique Palmer

On holding on to hope in a world that is far from faithful. Sometimes knowing what not to expect is the cornerstone of faith.

Full poem found at <https://www.splitthisrock.org/poetry-database/poem/god-or-a-lottery-ticket>

"Trying to find faith

in a world that is slowly killing me and blaming me for why they can't do it right..."

Music

Hymns Recommended as Easier to Lead

357 Bright Morning Stars

396 I Know This Rose Will Open

144 Now Is the Time Approaching

95 There Is More Love Somewhere

Choral or Vocal Pieces

All Shall Be Well

Several arrangements (Angela Saviaggione is a UU Musician)

<http://www.angelapiano.com/products/>

All Shall Be Well

Meg Barnhouse

On faith in the tenderness and friendship that reminds us all will be well...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9LwCtOm4nk>

I Know This Rose Will Open (STLT #396)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxXxcM72ctY>

Can't No One Know - Sweet Honey in the Rock

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RezioxixRU>

A Cover of the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fG7ndu6zwQ>

"Can't no one know at sunrise how this day is going to end..."

Stories For All Ages

- The Farmer & the Faith of Maybe:
<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=maybe+farmer+story&&view=detail&mid=563B89C96B1359A3E46D563B89C96B1359A3E46D&&FORM=VRDGAR>
- Thomas Potter & John Murray - <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/john-murray-day> & <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/john-murray-conversion>

Sermon Seeds

*Angles, Ideas & Twists To Tease Out the Connection
between Faith and Expectation.*

*How does faith deepen our understanding of being a people of expectation?
What does faith have to say about being a people of expectation?*

Quote - On the faithful expectation of the Unitarian Universalism that is yet to be

Rev. Dr. Natalie Fenimore

Shirley Chisholm was asked why she, a Black woman, was running for president: "You don't have a chance. Why are you doing that?" And she said, "Because I am in love with the America that does not yet exist," and that's how Unitarian Universalism is also. I'm in love with the Unitarian Universalism that does not yet exist. But I have to hold both the love for that thing and the love for the reality. It does not yet exist. It will probably not exist in my lifetime. I don't think it will in that of my children, but I can't deny my love for it. You know, wanting to be there in that struggle. That's why I'm fighting.

Essay - Choosing a Stubborn Love - UU World

Michael Hornsby

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/choosing-stubborn-love>

On loving a faith that falls short, and faithfully expecting it to do better

Quote - Anne Lamott, Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith

I have a lot of faith. But I am also afraid a lot and have no real certainty about anything. I remembered something Father Tom had told me--that the opposite of faith is not doubt, but certainty. Certainty is missing the point entirely. Faith includes noticing the mess, the emptiness and discomfort, and letting it be there until some light returns.

Podcast - Rocked by Doubt, Radiolab

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBKWR7TLEqs>

Follow three people as they navigate the journey of doubt. An exploration of our self-deception, pattern seeking and hunger to find our way back home. A reminder that doubt is one of life's most terrible blessings.

Quote - Rainer Maria Rilke

Believe in a love that is being stored up for you like an inheritance and have faith that in this love there is a strength and a blessing so large that you can travel as far as you wish without having to step outside it.

Quote - Trust Yourself to the Water

On the faithful expectation you will be held

Allan Watts

Faith is a state of openness or trust. To have faith is like when you trust yourself to the water. You don't grab hold of the water when you swim, because if you do you will become stiff and tight in the water, and sink. You have to relax, and the attitude of faith is the very opposite of clinging and holding on. In other words, a person who is fanatic in matters of religion and clings to certain ideas about the nature of God and the universe becomes a person who has no faith at all. Instead they are holding tight. But the attitude of faith is to let go and become open to truth, whatever it might turn out to be.

Story - The Wisdom Of The Sands

On faith as trusting the winds of life carrying you into something new.

Text: <https://www.spiritual-short-stories.com/the-wisdom-of-the-sands-wisdom-story-by-osho/>

Video and audio telling: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=176&v=tFR-FfE-yX8

“By hurtling in your own accustomed way you cannot get across. you will either disappear or become a marsh. you must allow the wind to carry you over to your destination... It is so, and if you do not believe it, you cannot become more than a quagmire...”

Story - Rev. Douglas Taylor

A story I found tells of a little girl and her father crossing a bridge. The father was kind of scared, so he asked his little daughter: “Sweetheart, please hold my hand so that you don’t fall into the river.” The little girl said: “No, Dad. You hold my hand.” “What’s the difference?” asked the puzzled father.

“There’s a big difference,” replied the little girl. “If I hold your hand and something happens to me, chances are that I may let your hand go. But if you hold my hand, I know for sure that no matter what happens, you will never let my hand go.”

Quote - [Marcus Borg](#)

On the faithful expectation that our crying out will receive a response...

The Hebrew word for faith in the Old Testament is *emoonah*. What makes that word interesting is that it’s the sound that a baby donkey makes when it is calling for its mother. To appreciate that, you have to say *emoonah* so it sounds like that. If you want to hear the meaning of *emoonah*, you need to say it like braying. I sometimes think to myself, if you say it soft, it’s almost like braying. The point being that faith in the Hebrew Bible is like a baby donkey calling out or crying for its mother. There’s something kind of wonderful about that. There is an element...I don’t know if you want to say of desperation in it or not, but there certainly is an element of confidence also that the cry will be heard.

Quote - Frederick Buechner

Faith is homesickness. Faith is a lump in the throat. Faith is less a position on than a movement toward.

Frederick Buechner

Song as Sermon Illustration - Meg Barnhouse’s [All Shall Be Well](#)

Framing by [Rev. Douglas Taylor](#)

On faith in the tenderness and friendship that reminds us all will be well...

“I am reminded of a song UU minister Meg Barnhouse wrote using the famous statement of faith by Julian of Norwich who said, “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.” In the song, Barnhouse poses a conversation with Julian and asks, how can you say, “All shall be well”? Don’t you know about sorrow and hunger and shame, don’t you know about loneliness and disease and cruelty? How can you say, “All shall be well,” when all these terrible things are out there in the human experience.

The song goes on with Barnhouse’s imagined response from Julian who says, “Nobody does not know about sorrow and hunger and shame. No one does not know about loneliness and disease and cruelty. But don’t you know there is also tenderness and friendship and love that never ends. And all shall be well, and all shall be well, all manner of thing shall be well.”

The song lifts up some of Julian of Norwich’s theology that suffering does not come from God. More, I think it offers some Unitarian Universalist theology that the way through suffering is in relationship – either relationship with God or simple human relationship, the song is open enough for different interpretations. It is our connections that feed us through the hard times. We each have a depth of experience and we have the support of tender, loving friends

Quote - [Anne Lamott](#)

I have a lot of faith. But I am also afraid a lot and have no real certainty about anything. I remembered something Father Tom had told me--that the opposite of faith is not doubt, but certainty. Certainty is missing the point entirely. Faith includes noticing the mess, the emptiness and discomfort, and letting it be there until some light returns.

Quote & Video - [Brene Brown](#)

I thought faith would say, "I will take away the pain and the discomfort." But what it ended up saying is "I will sit with you in it."

Video at <https://mbird.com/2013/07/brene-brown-reflects-on-how-jesus-wept/>

Quote - [Richard Rohr](#)

Faith is always, finally, a self-fulfilling prophecy. Faith actually begins to create what it desires... Without faith, you sink into the bad world that you most feared. With faith, you keep trusting, hoping, believing, and calling forth life from stones...

Quote - [Jurgen Moltmann](#)

Faith is the wakeful expectation of God, which touches all our senses. The early Christians prayed standing up, looking up, with outstretched arms and wide-open eyes, ready to walk or to leap forward. We can see this from the pictures in the catacombs in Rome. Their posture reflects tense expectation, not quiet heart searching. ... We are watching for God's advent. With tense attention, we open all our senses for the coming of God into our lives, into our society, to this earth.

Quote - [Sharon Salzberg](#)

The opposite of faith is not doubt. It's despair.

Quote - [Sharon Salzberg](#)

For me, faith has a lot to do with courage, and it's the courage to step forward into the unknown and, first of all, to admit that we don't know... to actually admit we don't know, and yet to say, "You know, I have the strength to go forward anyway..." it's connecting to our own deepest strengths so that we're not defined by this circumstance we find ourselves in in any given day.

Quote - [Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)

Faith is taking the first step even when you can't see the whole staircase.

Quote - [Rev. Megan Foley](#)

When we believe that we are supposed to be more, even when we aren't sure what the road to it will be like, that's how we show that we are a people of faith.

Quote - [Frederick Buechner](#)

Faith is better understood as a verb than as a noun, as a process than as a possession.... Faith is not being sure where you're going but going anyway. A journey without maps.

Sermon Frames - Acts of faith:

- Abraham's faith in God to take his son Isaac for sacrifice. (Genesis 22:1-19)
- Buddha sitting beneath the Bodhi tree, faith that truth can be found within himself
- Khadija's faith to embrace Islam after Muhammad came down from the mountain
- MLK's faith despite threats on his family and his life: "I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left...at that moment, I experienced the presence of the Divine as I have never experienced Him before. It seemed as though I could hear a voice saying, 'Stand up for righteousness; stand up for truth; and God will be at our side forever.'"

Quote - [Nick Cave](#)

On faith as an “act of cosmic defiance, of subversive optimism, of unconditional and insubordinate love” Faith’s call to defiantly expect the universe we wish for

[related to -but importantly different from - Borg’s 3rd type of [faith](#), “[visio](#).”

“Is this world cruel? I don’t think so. I think this world is indifferent and indifference is not cruelty. What connects me to you, Gianelli, and you to every other sentient being in the universe, is that the universe, simply does not care about us; it does not act with malice or desire to harm us – it is simply unaffected by our condition. If one acknowledges this state of affairs, then it sets up a situation that allows us to make a simple choice – either we respond to the indifference of the universe with self-pity and narcissism – as if the world has in some way personally betrayed us – and live our lives in a cynical, pessimistic and self-serving manner; or we stand tall, set our eyes clearly upon this unfeeling universe and love it all the same – even though, or especially because, it doesn’t love us. This act of cosmic defiance, of subversive optimism, of unconditional and insubordinate love, is the greatest act of human beauty we can perform. To stand before this great, blank, heartless cosmic event and say: ‘We believe in you’. ‘We love you’. ‘We care for you’. This is the definition of grace, Gianelli, and this is the epiphany you speak of. We create our own divinity, our own Godliness, through our ferocious need. We yearn the heavens awake...”

On Faith’s expectation that we grow in faith...

Marcus Borg on Four Ways of Understanding Faith

A sermon: http://www.explorefaith.org/faces/my_faith/borg/faith_by_marcus_borg.php

Book review: <https://confessionsqueen.blogspot.com/2010/02/at-christmas-and-easter-mass-when.html>

Book review: <https://kagreenstone.blogspot.com/2010/01/what-is-faith-marcus-borg.html>

James Fowler's Stages of Faith (And M. Scott Pecks’)

<http://www.psychologycharts.com/james-fowler-stages-of-faith.html>

Critique and Connection to the UU Context: <https://www.meadville.edu/files/resources/v3n1-piper-faith-development-a-critique-of-fowlers.pdf>

UU Sermon engagement: <https://www.uuamherst.org/sermons/in-a-rut-or-just-going-through-a-stage/>

Recommended Sermons

You Never Know

Rev. Victoria Safford

Audio & text: <https://whitebearunitarian.org/you-never-know-10-08-18-sermon/>

On a faithful and expectant hope that can't be sustained on one's own...

Excerpt: "Faith feels like the most private solitary thing, but it's not. It's communal and contagious... Faith is what our hands hold all together, when none of us is strong enough to hold on by ourselves."

Keepin' the Faith

Rev. Joan Javier-Duval

https://www.dropbox.com/s/Og0ohno1zintay9/February%203_Keepin%20the%20Faith_Joan%20Javier-Duval.pdf?dl=0

When I reflect on this spiritual fight and the gifts of music, art, ritual, and spiritual practice that have accompanied this resistance, I see a faith that isn't only about belief. It is a faithful orientation towards living... Despite all the obstacles and hardships, this faith is a steadying on when things get hard and persevering because you trust that things will get easier on the other side... Faith - the knowing that you can get through, that if you have endured the hard things, the unimaginable losses, that you will find a way through whatever life has in store for you now.

In This Delicate Turning - Sunday Morning GA Sermon

Rev. Marta Valentin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSYq3PW-e1w>

On the faithful expectation of our great turning

Faith and Patience

On the patience at the core of hopeful expectation.

Rev. Barbara Prose

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVWvaNVnk-M&list=PLT8wFooVCyvu3mCR6yPy2EHUsKT-QA2dr>

At the center of faith is patience - a willingness to trust in a timing, timeline and unfolding not of our own. Also life as a patient unfolding of and search for our faith: "What if we don't need faith to live, but instead live to find our faith?"

Faith for Hard Times, preached the Sunday after the Newtown shooting

Rev. Douglas Taylor

On the faith that our reserves are deeper than we expect.

<https://douglastaylor.org/2012/12/16/faith-for-the-hard-times/>

Excerpt: "I think this story from Saint Exupery's experience is illustrative not only of the 'dark night of the soul' type experiences of lostness and meaninglessness; it also shows something of the way we get through such experiences. Part of the answer is in the response of the community, and part of the answer is in the larger than believed reserves we each carry..."

Born of Bright Faith

Rev. Gretchen Haley

<https://revgretchenhaley.wordpress.com/2014/09/21/born-of-bright-faith/>

“Most of us recognize this kind of moment – the hope of finally blossoming after holding our lives tight in a bud... we respond with yes, despite no new evidence, no change in fact of circumstances... we follow it through. This is faith.”

Keeping the Faith in Times of Terror

Rev. Dr. Robert M. Hardies

On faith as placing hopeful expectation not on any one person but on us as a human family. On the call of liberal faith to place your hope and expectation in the hands of the human family.

Audio: <http://www.all-souls.org/node/1530>

“I thank god that my lot is bound up with that of the human race!”

“We come from a faith that says when the chips are down, we keep faith with the human family”

Closing Words

So Must We, Rev. A. Powell Davies

So far as I can see, all the great leaders—and the great exemplars of religion—possessed...faith in life's essence, in its hidden meaning, in its moral claim, and in the rightness of its inner spiritual guidance. And by this the great ones lived their lives. So must we. There are no problems greater than our power to solve them. There are no burdens greater than our strength. We shape—by every moment of our lives—the great decisions. Then let us venture still!—with reason as a lamp to guide us—but lighted with the light of faith.

All Shall Be Well

Based on Meg Barnhouse's lyrics, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9LwCtOm4nk>

May we go out today
with a trust in tenderness
and a faith in love that never ends,
remembering and believing that
"All will be well, and all will be well, all manner of things will be well."
Amen

A First Step Faith

Based on the words of MLK: "Faith is taking the first step even when you can't see the whole staircase."

May we go with faith.
Not the kind that is called to move mountains.
All we are asked, all the world needs
is the faith to take the first step even when the whole staircase sits beyond our view.
And may we remember
That none of these steps do we take alone.
Amen

Support & Inspiration

Join the Soul Matters Worship Leader Support Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Join the Soul Matters Ministers' Support Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/719788338192570/>

Attend one of our two monthly online ministers' brainstorming groups:

First Tuesdays and First Thursdays of each month at 1pm eastern

Attend our monthly online musicians' brainstorming group:

Second Thursdays of each month at 1pm eastern

Join the Soul Matters Inspiration Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Find musical inspiration on our Soul Matters Spotify music playlists:

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/spotify-lists.html>

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